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SUCCESS STORY

Trade Fair Spurs Exports from Serbia

Attending international trade shows pays off for Serbian herb processors with new export sales



Photo: Vladimir Petrovic

The Serbian delegation to *Vitafoods* is all smiles after their success in developing new customers and markets for their products.

The Serbian herb processors returned from Geneva with a commitment to set up a national association to lobby for their interests, and to support future international marketing activities. This effort will be supported by the USAID Agribusiness Project.

In May of 2009, for the first time ever, a small group of Serbian medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) processing firms attended the *Vitafoods* trade show in Geneva. The participation of these firms was partially supported by the USAID Serbia Agribusiness Project, with the organizational support of the Serbian national association "Dr. Jovan Tucakov". A total of seven companies participated, and all of them developed new commercial connections, and many began exporting as a result of the show.

The *Vitafoods* fair is the most important international trade show for the MAP sector, and it was essential for the Serbian companies to be present at the show to demonstrate to foreign buyers that Serbia can provide high quality raw materials to processors around the world. The trade show was attended by more than 8,000 participants from nearly 80 countries, and more than 500 companies exhibited their products.

The Serbia delegation achieved considerable success with their first attempt at international sales, with the participating companies signing contracts worth more than \$400,000. As of October 2009 these companies had already supplied more than \$200,000 of product to these new customers, and additional export sales were under negotiation. These firms also came to realize the importance of maintaining high quality in their products and using up to date packaging, marketing, and promotional materials for their products. These firms are now re-designing their packaging and promotional materials, and adopting new technology to insure quality standards.

The participation at the *Vitafoods* fair highlighted the importance of the industry having its own representative organization to handle the interests of the member firms. Based on this experience the companies involved will work to transform the "Dr. Jovan Tucakov" association into a more technical assistance agency, and then the group will form a new national association to address commercial and regulatory issues in the industry. This new association will receive support from the USAID Serbia Agribusiness Project, and will become the successor organization once the Project has ended.